



# General Assembly

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## Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011\*

### Part XI Capital expenditures

### Section 33 Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance

#### Addendum

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\* A summary of the approved programme budget will subsequently be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/64/6/Add.1)*.

## **Strategic heritage plan at the United Nations Office at Geneva**

### *Summary*

The present report summarizes the results of an initial engineering consultancy, which was completed at the United Nations Office at Geneva at the end of August 2009, and provides additional information on the proposed next steps in developing the envisaged "strategic heritage plan" at the United Nations Office at Geneva to ensure the timely preservation of the Palais des Nations. It offers a preliminary outline of the current building- and facility-related problems, including sustainability issues that necessitate urgent renovation, rehabilitation and restoration work, and provides details on the proposed conceptual engineering study to develop a project plan to ensure the continued functionality of the compound.

The projected resource requirements are already included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 (see A/64/6 (Sect. 33), paras. 33.11 and 33.23), which has been submitted for approval by the General Assembly.

## I. Introduction

1. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 includes a provision under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance, for the initiation of an engineering study at the United Nations Office at Geneva in respect of the envisaged "strategic heritage plan", aimed at developing a comprehensive renovation and refurbishment programme for the Palais des Nations. It was indicated also that proposals with respect to the strategic heritage plan would be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session following the completion of an initial basic assessment (A/64/6 (sect. 33), para. 33.11).

2. The initial assessment, prepared by an engineering consultancy firm, was completed at the end of August 2009. It offered a preliminary outline of current building and facility problems, including sustainability issues, which necessitate urgent renovation, rehabilitation and restoration work at the United Nations Office at Geneva. On the basis of that assessment, the present report provides information on the proposed next steps in developing the envisaged strategic heritage plan at the United Nations Office at Geneva to ensure the timely preservation of the Palais des Nations. The report also provides details on a proposed conceptual engineering study to develop a project plan to address the continued functionality of the compound. The request for approval by the General Assembly of the related resource requirements is already included under section 33 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

## II. Background

3. The Palais des Nations site is the second-largest United Nations-owned building complex after that at Headquarters, covering an area of 45 hectares, or 111 acres. The site comprises part of the Parc de l'Ariana, in the city of Geneva, and accommodates a number of buildings with a total area of 15 hectares (see annex). It was originally the seat of the League of Nations, whose rights were transferred to the United Nations by an agreement signed on 19 July 1946. Today, it is a central venue for multilateral diplomacy, hosting some 9,000 meetings annually.

4. The Palais des Nations constitutes a highly significant historical and architectural heritage asset of the United Nations and is in full service meeting the operational requirements of the Organization. The original Palace of the League of Nations, or the Palais des Nations itself, comprises four buildings constructed between 1929 and 1938. Another building, constructed between 1950 and 1952, was added to the Palais des Nations. In addition to those, the complex includes a number of annexes constructed or acquired between 1937 and 1964, as well as the E-building, constructed from 1968 to 1973, and two smaller buildings constructed more recently, in 2006 and 2008, respectively, to bring the site into compliance with the Headquarters minimum operating security standards.

5. The majority of the buildings at the Palais des Nations site face considerable maintenance challenges stemming from age, intensive use over the past 70 years and the cumulative effect of diminishing funding for maintenance purposes. The main building and its annexes have been maintained to the extent possible with the available means. However, ad hoc solutions based on the current approach of

including resources in the biennial proposed programme budget to meet the most urgent alteration, improvement and major maintenance requirements are no longer sufficient to address the long-term sustainability of the facilities.

### **III. Condition of the Palais des Nations**

6. Owing to the cumulative effects of ageing and extensive use, as confirmed by the initial assessment prepared by an engineering consultancy firm, the equipment and installations at the Palais des Nations, such as lifts, water pipes, electric wiring and sanitary installations, some of which date back to the 1930s, are in various stages of deterioration. As a result, the United Nations Office at Geneva is faced with both increasing health and safety risks to the users of the facilities and ever-increasing maintenance and operating costs.

7. For instance, the condition of the electrical systems and wiring often triggers power failures, adversely affecting the effectiveness of the Organization in delivering services. Inadequate insulation, outdated windows and inefficient heating methods result not only in significant avoidable operational expenses, but also in the excessive emission of greenhouse gases.

8. Furthermore, insufficient cooling systems in some parts of the buildings have resulted in a heightened risk of overheating of mission-critical information and communications technology equipment, which creates further operational and safety-related hazards. The skylights in many parts of the buildings, designed to bring natural light into the halls and large conference rooms, are in a critical state of deterioration and in some places have no anti-fall devices, posing serious security and safety risks in respect of blast vulnerability.

9. The United Nations Office at Geneva Library, which is the largest in the United Nations system, with 56 linear kilometres of documents, archives and publications, has experienced frequent flooding in recent decades. Over the years, thousands of documents in the archives area have been damaged. This threatens the preservation of the unique institutional memory of the United Nations.

10. As regards technical equipment, the majority is not in compliance with current industry standards in terms of safety codes, efficiency and operational cost-effectiveness. Lightning conductors are practically absent in the older buildings, which is a further fire risk. In some areas, although air-conditioning equipment has been upgraded in recent years, increased demand has resulted in overloads on the electrical system, which in turn leads to power outages.

11. In conclusion, if no significant investment is made in the near future to renovate and rehabilitate the overall site and its infrastructure, the buildings and installations will continue to deteriorate at an accelerating rate, threatening the loss of historic documents as a result of basement flooding, increasing the risk of electrical failure or even fire, wasting water and other precious resources to heat the premises and providing an unfavourable, and potentially unsafe, workplace and meeting space. If not looked at in a systematic way and addressed through a well-developed long-term programme, the historic site will continue to deteriorate in terms of its physical stability and operational effectiveness, and the costs of operating and maintaining the Palais des Nations are likely to continue to escalate progressively.

#### IV. Proposed project plan and next steps

12. In order to preserve the unique heritage, maintain the functionality and contain the operating and maintenance costs of the compound of the Palais des Nations, the United Nations Office at Geneva, in consultation with the Department of Management at Headquarters, specifically the Office of the Capital Master Plan and the Office of Central Support Services, has developed a strategic heritage plan for the renovation, rehabilitation and restoration of the site. The proposed plan would broadly involve three project phases: (a) initiation; (b) planning; and (c) execution.

13. As the first step, an engineering firm was selected in May 2009 through a competitive bidding process to undertake an initial basic assessment of the state of the buildings and the infrastructure of the entire compound of the Palais des Nations. Its scope of work also included the development of terms of reference for the envisaged future planning phase.

14. From June to the end of August 2009, the firm carried out a general assessment of the problems pertaining to the facilities of the Palais des Nations. It confirmed that the existing buildings and infrastructure did not comply with the current industry and sustainability standards. The assessment further underlined the urgency of conducting a more in-depth evaluation of the Palais des Nations site.

15. Upon the completion of the assessment, the engineering firm compiled a 594-page document containing comprehensive terms of reference for a recommended subsequent multi-step planning phase. These include project tasks that exceed the scope of the conceptual study, which is deemed the appropriate next step in commencing the planning phase of the project.

16. Building on the results of the initial assessment, the proposed commencement of the planning phase of the strategic heritage plan foresees the completion of a conceptual engineering and architectural study as a first important milestone and decision point for consideration by Member States. To that end, it is envisaged that the key deliverables of the Study would include:

(a) The establishment of key performance objectives in terms of the functionality of the premises, energy performance, the quality of the interior environment and security, as well as longevity and durability;

(b) The identification of major operational issues and critical security risks and the proposal of strategies to mitigate any impact on operations;

(c) A comprehensive high-level assessment of the renovation, rehabilitation and restoration needs of the Palais des Nations;

(d) Different options and technical alternatives;

(e) Alternative concepts and implementation strategies for executing a renovation, rehabilitation and restoration programme at the Palais;

(f) Recommendation of the concept deemed most appropriate for the necessary renovation, rehabilitation and restoration work, including project priorities, a high-level outline of a project plan, including a plan for the organization and management of the project, a provisional timeline and a rough order of magnitude of the possible cost.

17. A number of detailed tasks are recommended to be undertaken on the basis of the terms of reference developed in the initial assessment. The envisaged programme of work to be carried out in conjunction with the above-mentioned deliverables for the conceptual engineering study would include but not be limited to the following priority tasks:

(a) Building on the initial assessment results, inspect, evaluate and document the existing state of the buildings and technical infrastructure;

(b) Propose appropriate working methods to restore buildings of high heritage value and to undertake renovation and rehabilitation work without adversely affecting the operations of the United Nations Office at Geneva;

(c) Evaluate the energy consumption of each building and propose potentially applicable sustainability concepts and their implications in terms of sustainable certification and the potential for reduction of operating costs;

(d) Assess accessibility issues for disabled persons and recommend remedial action.

18. It is projected that a time frame of no less than six months will be necessary for an engineering firm to complete the deliverables set out above. Considering procurement lead times to competitively select a suitably qualified engineering firm, it is expected that the conceptual engineering study would be completed in the autumn of 2010 at the earliest.

19. Senior management of the Department of Management at Headquarters, including the Office of the Capital Master Plan and the Office of Central Support Services, will continue to provide advice and direction to the United Nations Office at Geneva during the conceptual engineering study.

20. Key findings of the conceptual engineering study and recommendations on the following steps to be carried out as part of the planning phase of the envisaged strategic heritage plan would be presented in the form of a progress report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session for consideration and approval by Member States.

## **V. Resource requirements**

21. An amount of \$1.1 million has been requested under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 relating to estimated requirements for the conceptual engineering study. Based on an analysis of the information available from the initial assessment, the estimate of \$1.1 million can be broken down as shown in the table below. This would include the cost of contractual services for an engineering firm to carry out the conceptual study plus the costs relating to technical personnel required at the United Nations Office at Geneva for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the study.

(United States dollars)

| <i>Object of expenditure</i>                                                      | <i>Estimated cost</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Other staff costs (D-1 level Senior Project Manager, for 10 months)               | 215 500               |
| Other staff costs (General Service level Administrative Assistant, for 10 months) | 95 000                |
| Contractual services (study by the engineering firm)                              | 789 500               |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                      | <b>1 100 000</b>      |

*Other staff costs (\$310,500)*

22. The provision for general temporary assistance estimated at \$215,500 is required to reinforce the Division of Administration at the United Nations Office at Geneva with a dedicated senior-level project manager. Considering the complexity of the project, its strategic importance and the impact of decision-making, it is essential to have an appropriate senior leadership position (at the D-1 level) to ensure that the project is guided by an expert with the required degree of technical expert knowledge and relevant practical project management experience.

23. The successful implementation of this critical project planning phase will be dependent on effective interfacing, extensive consultation and close coordination by the project manager. A seasoned senior manager is required to perform these critical functions, which involve the following parties:

- (a) Technical experts of the engineering firm;
- (b) Senior management and staff at the United Nations Office at Geneva;
- (c) The Department of Management at Headquarters, specifically the Office of the Capital Master Plan and the Office of Central Support Services;
- (d) External stakeholders, including host Government officials and representatives of other Member States.

24. The incumbent of the post would report through the Director of Administration to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and assume responsibility for completing the deliverables (described in para. 16 above) on time and within budget. He or she would provide overall direction and oversight for the project work. More specifically, the incumbent would be responsible for:

- (a) Developing and implementing an overall workplan;
- (b) Finalizing the statement of work for the necessary consultancy services;
- (c) Leading the competitive process to select an engineering firm;
- (d) Providing direction for the work of the consultants and ensuring compliance with contractual obligations;
- (e) Monitoring on-site engineering and architectural studies, including documentation of all findings on the condition of buildings and infrastructure and other relevant observations;
- (f) Conducting briefings and providing information through progress reports and other means of communication, as appropriate;

(g) Preparing the draft progress report of the Secretary-General on the project.

25. Furthermore, general temporary assistance resources estimated at \$95,000 would be required to supplement existing staff providing assistance in the architectural and engineering work to be carried out during the conceptual engineering study.

*Contractual services (\$789,500)*

26. An estimated amount of \$789,500 would cover the consultancy services required to conduct the conceptual engineering study described in section IV above.

## **VI. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly**

27. **The General Assembly is requested:**

(a) **To take note of the present report and approve the initiation of the recommended conceptual engineering study at the Palais des Nations;**

(b) **To approve the related resource requirements in the amount of \$1.1 million, as reflected under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011.**

### Site plans

Old building: 1929-1938

Secretariat - Council - Assembly - Library

E conference building: 1968-1973

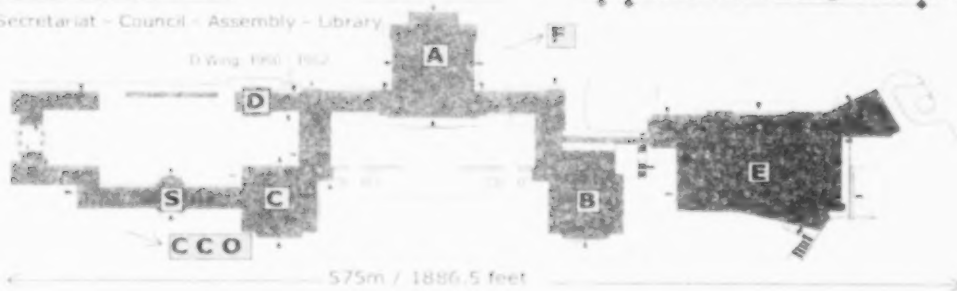


Figure 11  
Compound of the Palais des Nations

